

Mohammed

The Prophet of Arabia

Jenkin Lloyd Jones

Religions of the World, VII

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"By the brightness of the morning; and by the night when it groweth dark: thy lord hath not forsaken thee, neither doth he hate thee. Verily the life to come shall be better for thee than this present life: and thy Lord shall give thee a reward wherewith thou shalt be well pleased. Did he not find thee an orphan, and hath he not taken care of thee? And did he not find thee wandering in error, and hath he not guided thee into truth? And did he not find thee needy, and hath he not enriched thee? Wherefore oppress not the orphan: neither repulse the begger: but declare the goodness of thy Lord."

"That is not righteousness: whether ye turn your faces towards East or West, God's is the East as well as the West. But verily righteousness is his who believes in God, in the day of judgment, in the angels, in the Book and the prophets; who bestows his wealth, for God's sake, upon kindred, and orphans, and the poor, and the homeless, and all those who ask; and also upon delivering the captives; he who is steadfast in prayer, giveth alms, who standeth firmly by his covenants when he has once entered into them; and who is patient in adversity, in hardship, and in times of trial. These are the righteous, and these are the God-fearing."

"When the night overshadowed Abraham, he saw a star, and he said, 'This is my Lord;' but when it set, he said, 'O my people, verily I am clear of that which ye associate with God: I direct my face unto him who created the heavens and the earth.'"

"And in the people's absence Abraham went into the temple where the idols stood, and he brake them all in pieces, except the biggest of them, that they might lay the blame upon that. And when they were returned, and saw the havoc which had been made, they said, 'Who hath done this to our gods? He is certainly an impious person.' And certain of them answered, 'We heard a young man speak reproachfully of them: he is Abraham.' They said, 'Bring him therefore before the people, that they may bear witness against him.' And when he was brought before the assembly, they said unto him, 'Hast thou done this unto our gods, O Abraham?' He answered 'Nay, that biggest of them hath done it: but ask them if they can speak.' And they returned unto themselves, and said the one to the other, 'Verily, ye are the impious persons.' Afterwards they elapsed into their former obstinacy and said, 'Verily thou knowest that these speak not.' Abraham answered, 'Do ye therefore worship, besides God, that which cannot profit you at all, neither can it hurt you? Fie on you: and upon that which ye worship besides God. Do ye not understand?' They said, 'Burn him, and avenge your gods: if ye do this it will be well.'"

—From the Koran.

MOHAMMED

THE PROPHET OF ARABIA

In the year 571 A. D., in the sun-parched valley of Mecca, Arabia, was born one whose name is uttered to-day with a reverence second only to the name they give the Eternal, by over one hundred and fifty million people, representing, speaking in round numbers, about one-twelfth of the entire inhabitants of the globe, and occupying perhaps one-third of the territory of the civilized world. To those whose school-days ended a quarter of a century or more ago, the old geographies condensed the Christian estimate if not the Christian knowledge of this man into a single phrase, as follows: "Mohammed was an impostor who flourished in Arabia in the seventh century of the Christian era." But in less than twenty-five years there has come into being the science of comparative religions, since which time it is difficult to find any intelligent man, of whatever Christian thought or

prejudice, who will ascribe to this man the character of "impostor." Whatever Mohammed was not, he was one of the sincere sons of earth. Whatever claims he may not maintain, all are agreed that he had the genius of sustained effort coupled with rare insight. And these things come only from sincerity. For well does Carlyle say, "A false man cannot build a brick house." Of Mohammed, his hero-prophet, he adds: "This silent, great soul was one who could not but be in earnest." I make no apology for speaking reverently the name of one who for twelve centuries has been a conquering power in the world of souls, a name that is still moving on, subduing, persuading, ennobling wayward spirits. In this discourse I shall speak of the Man, the Book, the Religion and the People suggested by this name.

I. THE MAN. The obscure and unpromising settings of his birth necessitated, as in the case of most of the other great teachers, holy inventions of marvels and signs by later ages in order to give the great life what seemed to be a fitting origin. His father, Abdallah, was a poor member of the sacred tribe whose duty it was to guard the rude sanctities of Mecca. He died away from home before the young wife, Amina, was delivered of her first born, whom she called

Mohammed, "the Praised." Four camels, a herd of goats, and Baraka, a faithful slave herder, constituted the widow's inheritance. It is written that grief dried up the maternal fountains in her breasts, and that the babe found a foster-mother in the tent of a shepherdess. At six years old the child was taken to visit his father's grave at a place which was subsequently known as Modena, a place to which the orphan was destined to give immortal fame. On his return the child found himself motherless as well as fatherless. Two years later the grandfather, who had been to him as a father, died also. And the sickly little waif, who from his infancy seems to have been subject to spasms or nervous attacks of an epileptic nature, finds shelter in the poor home of a paternal uncle. Abu-Talib, the uncle, seems to have been too poor to retain the guardianship of the Sacred Stone and the Holy Well. They passed into richer hands. The uncle followed the caravans to and from far-off Syria, probably as a camel driver, while the child made himself useful as a herd boy. In the later years of his life, when surrounded by a retinue and honored as prophet and king, he said to one selling berries: "Pick me out some of the blackest, for they are sweet. Even such was I wont to gather when I tended the flocks of Mecca." It

is probable that as he grew older the boy journeyed with his uncle wherever Arabian traffic led the caravans. At twenty-four he entered the service of Kadijah, a wealthy and honorable widow some fifteen years his senior. For her he conducted caravans and transacted business, visiting, among other places, Jerusalem and Damascus. He did his work in such a way that his employer discovered not only his clearness of head, but his purity and warmth of heart. With fitting delicacy but evident skill, the widow proceeded to exercise the unacknowledged but often practiced, and, for aught I see, perfectly legitimate right of wooing. Kadijah's suit was successful, and the timid camel driver, whose bashfulness had been compared to that of a veiled virgin, found in the wealthy Kadijah one in every way worthy to become a companion to a prophet and fellow-laborer with a reformer. She was one who could soothe him in his feverish hours, strengthen him in his moments of weakness, encourage him in his high undertaking and watch with him in those terrible moments of doubt and anxiety that must come into the life of every man who has staked all his time, energy, goods and outward life upon some movement of the unseen, in the interest of some intangible realities, the foundations of which are within, the existence of

which is known to spirit alone. The wealth of Kadijah enabled her to make another contribution, invaluable and perhaps indispensable to the reformation of Arabia. She lifted the life of the prophet above the corroding cares and carking anxieties for the wherewith to preserve his life and his honesty while he concerned himself with the searching problems of life, and spent himself in the interest of others. Kadijah gave to this prophetic soul of the desert leisure in which to prophesy. She made possible that periodic retirement which is absolutely indispensable to him who is to come forth with healing and power in his words. Out of the solitude and silences of life are born the immortal sentences as well as the immortal deeds. Tragic are the strains of him who must needs serve the world and testify to truth, but who is denied that freedom from the world which makes it possible to accomplish his high behest. There are many graphic word pictures, of the authenticity and validity of which there is no room for serious doubt, preserved for us of this man. For many years he seems to have gone in and out among the citizens of Mecca, a meditative, quiet, respectable and respectful citizen, without giving a hint to his neighbors of any potency within. During these years he seems to have been nothing more to them than "one of our

best citizens," probably most often regarded as the "fortunate husband of Kadijah." But inwardly there must have been the turmoil and the triumphs possible only to great souls. If there were sweet joys, we may be sure that there were also deep sufferings. Serious thinking and high thoughts spring from nothing less profound. Outwardly he was probably the "gentleman with a tinge of sadness," perhaps with a touch of the impatience with surroundings which is so often misinterpreted as scorn, pride, or misanthropy. Inwardly the observer was doubtless ripening into the thinker, and the law-abiding citizen and kindly neighbor was ripening into a devotee.

Here is one of the word-photographs of him: "Medium height, broad shoulders, wide chest, strong bone and muscle, massive head, curling, dark hair falling upon his shoulders, black, restless eyes under heavy eye-lashes, manly, oval face; his step was quick and firm like that of one descending a hill, his skin was clear and soft, red and white appearing through the tawny complexion. His hands were as silk and satin; his countenance was mild and pensive." Said one: "Oh my little son, hadst thou seen him, thou wouldst have said, 'I have seen a sun rising.'" Another testifies: "I saw him on a moonlight night and he was brighter and more beautiful to me than

the moon." In his habits he was simple in the midst of Arabian simplicity. His dress was plain to coarseness, yet fastidious in its arrangement. He was fond of ablutions and perfumes. In the height of his dignity and power he always kindled his own fire, swept his own floor, milked his own goats, mended his own clothes, and slept on a leathern mat. His food was dates, water and barley bread. Honey and milk were luxuries which he seldom allowed himself. At times he laughed heartily, showing "teeth white as hail-stones." He was easy of approach, "even as the river bank to him that draweth water therefrom." He loved and was beloved by animals. He always had a kind word for children. "He was never the first to withdraw his hand from the grasp of one who offered his." He would not allow servants to be scolded. Strong drink he abhorred. Said a servant, "Ten years was I about the prophet, and he never said as much as 'uff!' to me." When asked to curse one, he replied: "I have not been sent to curse, but to be a mercy to man-kind." He visited the sick, followed any bier he met, sat at the table of slaves. Says a native biographer: "His hand was the most generous; his breast the most courageous; his tongue was the most truthful. He was a most faithful protector, the sweetest and most agreeable

in conversation; those who saw him were filled with reverence; those who came near him loved him; they who had tried to describe him would say, 'I have never seen his like either before or after.' "

These are some of the pictures preserved in the records and traditions of those who were reformed and redeemed by this man. To those who are inclined to distrust this picture and to dismiss it as an ideal, I reply that it is the idealized Mohammed that is the religious prophet of the one hundred and fifty million souls, as it is the idealized Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus, that have consecrated souls and shrines innumerable all over the face of the earth. In the second place, this idealized picture, as the other idealizations, instead of over-reaching must necessarily fall short of any real measurement of the facts in the case. What words can outline the power centered in these major prophets of the race? These descriptions may or may not fit the inoffensive husband of Kadajah, the well-to-do citizen of Mecca, but who dares believe that they adequately measure the soul after it had burst its bands and risen to a kindling realization of a divine mission? Who will portray the man enkindled by heavenly fire that was to burn so much dross, cruelty and superstition out of the world? The reverence that

bows in humility before the simplest flower must not be arrogant in the presence of a spiritual hero. He who can say,—

“Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies:—
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is,”—

must not be too incredulous in the presence of the great prophet of Arabia. We can ill afford to distrust the poor attempts of the human heart to outline a truth-seeker and a truth-teller so long as these attempts do not violate the methods of the universe or throw discredit on the laws of God.

The Mohammed thus far described, the fortunate citizen of Mecca, had he died in the fortieth year of his age, would have gone down beneath the resistless tide of the centuries.

Can we get a glimpse of the soul life of this helper? I have spoken of the leisure which the fortunate marriage brought him. Tradition says, “Solitude became now a passion with him.” The while his neighbors prayed and fasted according to the Mecca ritual, he spent days and nights in a sunless cave an hour’s walk away. During one of these somber experiences in the middle of the night, “the blessed night of Al-kadir,” the Koran

calls it, a vision came to him, saying, "Cry!" "What shall I cry?" "Cry, in the name of the Lord." And the cell was flooded with celestial light; and the angel displayed a silver robe, exclaiming, "O, Mohammed! thou art indeed a prophet of God, and I am his angel Gabriel."

There are other external trappings to a story which, it is easy for us to believe, is an inward experience outwardly portrayed. These words are very suggestive: "He felt as if a book had been written in his heart." He promptly seeks his spiritual friend and soul companion and says to her in his perplexity, "Am I who have not believed it to become a soothsayer, or mad?" Kadijah believed in her husband. Love had opened her eyes, and she said, "Rejoice, O dear husband; be of good cheer. No harmful thing has happened to thee, for thou speakest truth, dost not return evil for evil, keepest faith, art of a good life, kind to thy relations and friends, neither art thou a talker abroad in the bazaar. Thou wilt yet surely be the prophet of the people." Blessed be the name of Kadijah. True to woman's higher instincts, she was prompt to recognize and quick to encourage the prophetic movements of the human soul. Nay, more than that; she herself had the prophet's insight, and saw that morality was the sure foundation of prophecy and

nobility the unquestioned evidence of a life from God and with God. Her venerable cousin, Waraca, one who "knew the Scriptures of the Jews and Christians," was taken into the wife's confidence, and the dark and trying experiences of her husband in the cave were detailed. And she, according to the narrative, exclaimed, "Holy! Holy! This is the same law that came to Moses. Tell him he will be the prophet of his people. Bid him be of brave heart."

But, like Moses and all truly great souls, Mohammed hesitated and distrusted, now driven to the brink of suicide by an unseen force, then lured by an entrancing vision of troops of people entering through him into the religion of the one true God. Gradually he began to dissuade his people to abandon their gross idolatry. One after another were shaped in his mind and thrown out to his neighbors the sentences and texts that finally took form in the Koran, the bible of Arabia. At the end of three years he could count only fourteen converts, the first of whom were the faithful wife, her cousin, his daughter and his servant. His kinsfolks sneered. The villagers called him a driveller, a star-gazer, a maniac-poet. The dignitaries pointed the finger at him as he passed, scornfully saying, "There goes the son of Abdallah, who has converse with the heavens."

For ten years more he continued this quiet, patient work of reformation. Slowly the leaven worked. Meanwhile, opposition grew. Mutterings and threats followed him around. Wealth used its weapons. Politics tried to intimidate. His uncle and foster-father, Abu-Talib, could not understand his nephew's protest, but continued to believe in his integrity. When he learned that the villagers had declared this blasphemy against the gods should be borne no longer, he sent for Mohammed, remonstrated with him, and gently threatened. For was he not endangering the lives of the ancient and sacred tribes? The prophet burst into tears as he replied, "By Allah! uncle, if they put the sun to my right hand and the moon to my left, I will not give up the course I am pursuing until Allah gives me success, or I perish," and he turned away. The uncle's heart melted, and he cried, "Come back! son of my brother! Depart in peace, O my nephew! Say whatever thou desirest. For, by Allah! I will in no wise abandon thee forever." Oppression increased. The weaker followers emigrated, seeking and finding protection under a Jewish Christian king in Abyssinia. Mecca sent a delegation asking for their expulsion, but the reformed Arabians showed the chapter in their scripture which fantastically but respectfully speaks of John the

Baptist and Jesus, and having urged the case in the following language, they were allowed to remain:

*“We lived in ignorance, in idolatry, in unchastity, the strong oppressed the weak; we spoke untruth; we violated the duties of hospitality. Then a prophet arose, one whom we knew from our youth, with whose descent, and conduct, and good faith and morality, we are all well acquainted. He told us to worship one God; to speak the truth; to keep good faith; to assist our relations; to fulfill the rights of hospitality; to abstain from all things impure, ungodly, unrighteous. And he ordered us to say prayers, give alms, and to fast. We believed in him. We followed him. But our countrymen persecuted us, tortured us, and tried to cause us to forsake our religion. And now we throw ourselves upon your protection and confidence.”

About this time the faithful wife and the protecting uncle died; and the prophet found himself penniless. Pilgrims coming from Medina, the burial place of his father, a city three days' travel to the northward, had learned of the fame of the rising prophet and were friendly to him. This precipitated the crisis. Concealment and flight became necessary. Thus runs the beautiful story: With a single follower he finds lodgement in a cave. Here they spend the night. Early in the morning pursuers are on their track. The fugitives listen to the noise of their approach. “There

*Literary remains of Emanuel Deutsch, Islam, p. 107.

are but two of us, we had better surrender," said the attendant. "Nay, three of us," says the prophet; "you, I, and Allah." A dove sits undisturbed upon her nest at the mouth of the cave. During the night a spider has thrown its web across the opening. These witnesses to the solitude within throw the pursuers off the track, and they leave the cave unexplored. Says Bosworth Smith in his interesting book on Mohammed and Mohammedanism, "By a sound instinct, this, one of the sublimest stories in all history, has been made to mark the era of Mohammedan chronology. Their A. H. 1, Anno Hegira, the Year of Flight, corresponds with our A. D. 622, Anno Domini, the Year of our Lord."

The entrance into Medina marks a new era in the life of the prophet. Islam, which probably means "submission to God's will," begins. Kadijah, the good angel, is dead. Instead of welcome and the rest and love that restores, he finds opposition. Soon the persecuted finds himself at the head of a defensive, then an advancing, and finally a persecuting movement. He builds a place of worship. He assumes leadership. At the end of the second year he has an army of three hundred and five followers. Success is taken as evidence of divine favor, and the rapid conquest of Arabia follows. Seven years after the flight he

returns to Mecca, and the pilgrim is received with triumphal honors.

In the tenth year of the Hegira, surrounded by loving disciples, with words of trust on his lips, Mohammed died. When Omar, an enthusiastic captain, declared that the prophet could not die, Abu-Bekr, a wiser and earlier friend, said, "It is not Mohammed but the God of Mohammed we have learned to worship." One of the prophet's own battle orders was recalled. "Mohammed is no more than a prophet. What if he had been killed; need ye go back? He that turneth back injureth not God in the least, but himself."

2. THE BOOK. A careful student has characterized the Koran as "the best known and most revered book in all the world." The learned and lamented Emanuel Deutsch says: "No religious work extant bears so clearly and emphatically the traces of one mind." According to this scholar the name Koran is equivalent to our word "Cry," the word the angel spoke to him in his earliest vision. Al Koran was "The Cry," the prophetic call, the message of religion which God had given to the Arabian people through Mohammed its prophet. It consists in the main of disconnected bits of wisdom, history, tradition and ritual which the prophet dictated to his confidential attendants. It

is doubtful whether Mohammed knew how to write, at least at the beginning of his career. At the time of his death these chapters, or suras, as they are called, were scattered bits, reverentially held in the hands of the faithful. Zaid, a faithful scribe, was selected by the earlier followers to make the compilation. From flat stones, pieces of leather, ribs of palm leaves, but chiefly from the breasts of men, the memories of his followers, were the pages gathered. No attempt seems to have been made at chronology or editing. The only order of arrangement was probably an attempt to put the longest first; but even this rule is often violated. Carlyle describes the book thus made as follows:

“It is as toilsome reading as I ever undertook. A wearisome, confused jumble, crude, incondite; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement; most crude, incondite;—insupportable stupidity, in short! Nothing but a sense of duty would carry any European through the Koran. We read in it, as we might in the State-Paper Office, unreadable masses of lumber, that perhaps we may get some glimpses of a remarkable man.”

As a book of religion, judged by its power over the people who revere it, it ranks immeasurably higher than as a book of literature. The very fragmentary character of its sentences, the constant reiteration of a few moral precepts, is the secret of its power. It is in extent about the size of our

New Testament. In a properly conducted mosque, it is absolutely read through, every word of it, every day in the year, thirty relays of priests being employed to carry on the reading.

Had I the ability, I have not the time to attempt an analysis of its teaching. Every chapter is introduced with the words, "In the name of Allah, the merciful and compassionate." Its precepts in the main represent devout, trustful morality, with little that is sensuous in its images, common impression to the contrary notwithstanding. The heaven and hell of the Mohammedan are not more sensuous than the descriptions of the same in an ordinary camp-meeting. Read the most graphic and fantastic passages in the sixteenth and one hundred and first suras, then compare them with similar passages from the book of Revelation, to say nothing of the works of Jonathan Edwards and his kind, and you will realize how unfounded is the popular impression concerning this matter.

It is probable that the barren, weird and unpoetic land of Arabia is also responsible for the common impression that the Allah of the Moslem, the God of Arabia, is a grim, unrelenting, unlovable, though omnipotent potentate. Those who have studied it most closely are most prompt to deny such sweeping assertions. No New Testament phrase is more tender or Hebrew psalm more

trustful than are the words of the ninety-third sura, entitled "The Brightness," while other portions prove not only the tenderness but the breadth of Mohammed's thought, for his intensity did not defeat his universality. The piety of submission, the sanctity of the inevitable, the sacredness of fate, which form so much of the burden of Mohammed's gospel, are elements of universal religion and touch the undying needs of the human soul.

The central doctrine of the Koran is what Renan would have us believe to be the central thought of the Semitic race, of which the Arabs are a branch, namely, the oneness of Deity, the unity of God. If Christianity had not yielded to the polytheizing tendency of Greece and ameliorated the severity of its monotheism into a tri-theism, perhaps Mohammedanism might never have had an existence as a separate religion. The Koran bristles with its resentment to idolatry. It brooks no division of the oneness of the Divine. Mahmūd, the conqueror of Hindoostan, was offered, it is recorded, ten million pounds sterling if he would only spare the famous idol in the pagoda at Surât. Spite of his well known avarice, he replied, "Never shall Mahmūd, the idol-destroyer, go down to posterity as an idol-seller." And he broke the sacred image into pieces. Says Bosworth Smith:

“Mohammedanism is essentially a spiritual religion. As instituted by Mohammed, it had ‘no priest and no sacrifice’; in other words, no caste of sacrificing priests were ever allowed to come between the human soul and God; forbidding the representation of all living things alike, whether as objects of use or of admiration, of veneration or of worship, Mohammedanism is more opposed to idolatry even than we are ourselves. Mohammed hated images more sternly even than the Iconoclasts of Constantinople or the soldiers of Cromwell. Every mosque in the world of Islam bears witness to this. Statuary and pictures being forbidden, variegated marbles and festoons of lamps, and geometric shapes, and tortuous inscriptions from the Koran have to supply their place as best they can, and form that peculiar species of ornamentation, strictly confined to the inanimate world, which we call Arabesque; and which is still to be traced in the architecture of so many churches and so many mosques along the frontier line of four thousand miles which divides the realm of the Crescent from that of the Cross.”

Naturally to us, the most interesting passages in the Koran are those which carry us back to Father Abraham, from whom the three great monotheistic faiths of the world claim to have descended. In the sixth and twenty-first suras we have vivid oriental arguments against idolatry and polytheism, while the one hundred and twelfth sura contains the banner words, the rallying cry of Islam, whether the call be to battle or to prayer.

The general in the field and the dervish from his minaret both loudly proclaim,

“GOD IS ONE GOD, THE ETERNAL GOD. HE BEGETTETH NOT, NEITHER IS HE BEGOTTEN. AND THERE IS NOT ANY ONE LIKE UNTO HIM.”

But not by what this book contains for us, not by its literary, religious, or philosophic contents, measured by our standard, are we to estimate it. Rather must we judge it by its mighty power in history; by the way it has swayed a half-barbarous, nomadic people into the ways of ordered government; by the power that it has had and still has in holding in check the passions of men and arousing the loyalties of the soul. Again I quote from Deutsch:

“By the aid of the Koran the Arabs conquered a world greater than that of Alexander the Great, greater than that of Rome, and in as many tens of years as the latter had wanted hundreds to accomplish her conquests; by the aid of which they, alone of all the Shemites, came to Europe as kings, whither the Phœnicians had come as tradesmen, and the Jews as fugitives or captives. They came to Europe to hold up, together with these fugitives, the light to Humanity—they alone, while darkness lay around; to raise up the wisdom and knowledge of Hellas from the dead, to teach philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and the golden art of song to the West as well as to the East, to stand at the cradle of modern science, and to cause us late

epigoni forever to weep over the day when Granada fell."

3. THE RELIGION AND THE PEOPLE. This brilliant passage tempts a wider sweep of the mind, and we will try to look at this religion in a larger way. Here again we must not forget that Mohammed is one thing and Mohammedanism quite another. It is not for me to trace the brilliant career of the Saracens, to follow the devastating tracks of the Moors, or trace the triumphant march of the crescent, which at one time came so near supplanting the cross above the thrones of Europe. I may not be able to show the influence of this religion in modifying and humanizing the harsh Turkish races over which the crescent floats. Still less can I show how the Mohammedan leaven is even now pushing its ferment into the heart of Africa, India and China. And nearly always for the betterment of the people it reaches; that is, it is supplanting lower forms of religion and more degrading standards of morals. The Nile from source to mouth is to-day a Mohammedan river. The Jordan, the Euphrates, the Ganges, and the Yang-tse-kiang, all the ancient sacred rivers of the East, to-day fertilize the territory of Islam and slake the thirst of the most temperate people in the world, the very constitution of whose religion forbids the intoxicating draught.

Much of this has been told in the fiftieth, fifty-first and fifty-second chapters of Gibbon's History of the Roman Empire, perhaps the most brilliant chapters in that brilliant work. And the subsequent studies of Lecky, Draper, and others, have essentially confirmed the conclusions of Gibbon.

The story of Mohammedanism, it must be confessed, contains many atrocities, much cruelty, mountains of barbarism. Of these facts he who seeks will find ready information. But still I think it must be said with great emphasis that Mohammed did come into the world as a mighty reformer, and that Mohammedanism has made a magnificent contribution to human progress, the enlargement of mind and the elevation of morals. The Koran was no sooner in existence than it called for interpretations. And grammarians, lexicographers, rhetoricians and school-masters, sprung up everywhere. Says Draper:

"In less than a century after the death of Mohammed, the Iliad, the Odyssey and philosophic authors, had been translated into Arabic. Schools of medicine, law and astronomy, were started in Bagdad, and during the ninth century when Christian Europe was dull and stupid with its superstition and ignorance, the Moslem kingdom was busy in collecting great libraries, establishing schools in connection with every mosque, originating the systematic study of the Natural Sciences, particularly geometry, algebra, optics and chem-

istry. The great library at Cairo contained one hundred thousand of transcribed volumes, six thousand five hundred on medicine and astronomy alone. The Saracen Empire was dotted with colleges. In these times, and by these people, clocks were invented; nitric acid, sulphuric acid and alcohol, were discovered. In agriculture, they were devoting themselves to problems of irrigation, manuring, and the improvement of their breeds of cattle. The culture of rice, sugar and coffee, was introduced by them, and the manufacture of silk, leather, paper, and book-binding encouraged."

All through these centuries of conflict and carnage, the terrible generations of war and hatred, the Mohammedan religion held its dominant sway. Compared with the other religions studied in this course, Mohammedanism has preserved its purity in thought and standards to a remarkable degree, however it may have failed in practice. Mohammed from first to last has been a man, earth-envi-roned, confessing the limitations of his human nature. He wrought no miracles and based his religion on no miraculous claim, save the astounding miracles of the universe, of man, and the Koran, which is the revelation of God to man through man. He always presented himself as a poor sinner but a great prophet. Islam has always been a comparatively simple religion, with a brief creed universal in its scope, and few, but forceful sacraments. The month of fasting and prayer,

the Ramidan, a survival of the pre-Mohammedan religion, alternates from mid-winter to mid-summer so as to cultivate self-denying endurance in the extremes of nature. During these days enemies are to sheathe their swords and even marauders cease their plunder. A pilgrimage once during a lifetime to Mecca is the dream and hope of every faithful Mohammedan. He goes thence to kiss the Kaaba, the black stone, supposed by the scientific to be a pre-historic aerolite. Legend says it was at first white, but has been turned black by the kisses of sinful men. The last was the one superstition so deeply rooted that even Mohammed did not dare attempt its removal.

In the one miraculous journey made in a dream to heaven, riding on a ray of light, Mohammed encountered Moses, who told him that the Lord required of his people fifty prayers a day. Mohammed demurred, and pleaded that his people were not equal to it, and begged of Moses to return with a petition that the number might be reduced. Moses came back with the answer that the number had been abated to forty. Again a remonstrance; again a reduction of ten; this continued until the number was reduced to five. The last command was accepted. And to this day the devout Moslem the world over prostrates himself five times each day before the Unseen, murmuring the

words, "Allah il Allah," "The Lord is one Lord." In all Mohammedan structures, be it church, home or school, there is an easily discovered mark indicating the direction of Mecca. Towards this all turn in the hours of their devotion. All the devout carry a triple-stringed rosary, each composed of thirty-three beads, by means of which they tell the ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah. Both the name and the practice are beautifully presented to us in Edwin Arnold's "Pearls of Faith." The first name given in this list is "The Merciful," the last is "The Patient." Strictly speaking, Islam is a religion without priests. Pious officials from the minarets of their mosques, with the aid of gongs or cymbals summon the faithful to prayer with the cry, "GOD IS GREAT! GOD IS GREAT! THERE IS NO GOD BUT GOD! MOHAMMED IS HIS APOSTLE! COME TO PRAYERS! COME TO PRAYERS!" When the invitation is given at early dawn, to this cry is added: "PRAYER IS BETTER THAN SLEEP! PRAYER IS BETTER THAN SLEEP!" These exhortations have not gone without their intended effect. He has studied the human heart superficially and has an inadequate psychology who cannot see how such a call, running through the ages and through the continents of selfish, passionate humanity, must have girdled the earth with humility and caused the flowers of reverence, gentleness and

submission, to bloom more abundantly in the gardens of God.

We think so persistently of the hardness, the cruelty and austerity of Islam, that, without forgetting the grim and forbidding facts, I am anxious to impress you with the truth that it has a wealth of treasure of the other kind. I ask you to read Arnold's "Pearls of Faith," that you may discover there the trustful, tender, mystic side of Mohammedanism. Look into the history and literature of what is called Sufism, a Mohammedan sect, founded, it is said, by Rabia, who flourished in the first century of the Hegira, and was buried at Jerusalem. She carried the doctrine of divine love to its highest potency. Her spirit, interpreted by a Moslem poet, has been translated to us by James Freeman Clarke in the following exquisite lines:

"Rabia, sick upon her bed,
By two saints was visited,—

Holy Malik, Hassan wise;
Men of mark in Moslem eyes.

Hassan said, 'Whose prayer is pure
Will God's chastisement endure.'

Malik from a deeper sense,
Uttered his experience:—

'He who loves his Master's choice
Will in chastisements rejoice.'

Rabia saw some selfish will
In their maxims lingering still,
And replied: 'O men of grace!
He who sees his Master's face
Will not in his prayers recall
That he is chastised at all!'

Here is another lesson of the same kind taught in Mohammedan parable, translated for us by the same hand. And I have no doubt that the experience here portrayed reflects the heart-life of hundreds of thousands of Mohammedan people as it reflects the experience of millions in all faiths, and of many who think they have no faith:

“ ‘Allah, Allah!’ cried the sick man, racked with pain
the long night through;
Till with prayer his heart was tender, till his lips like
honey grew.

But at morning came the tempter; said, ‘Call louder,
child of pain!
See if Allah ever hear, or answer ‘Here am I’ again.’

Like a stab, the cruel cavil through his brain and pulses
went;
To his heart an icy coldness, to his brain a darkness
sent.

Then before him stands Elias; says, ‘My child! why
thus dismayed?
Dost repent thy former fervor? Is thy soul of prayer
afraid?’

'Ah!', he cried, 'I've called so often; never heard the
'Here am I;'

And I thought God will not pity, will not turn on me
his eye.'

Then the grave Elias answered, 'God said, 'Rise,
Elias, go,—

Speak to him, the sorely tempted; lift him from his
gulf of woe.

'Tell him that his very longing is itself an answering
cry;

That his prayer, 'Come, gracious Allah,' is my answer,
'Here am I.'

'Every inmost aspiration is God's angel undefiled;
And in every 'O my Father!' slumbers deep a 'Here
my child.'''

How shall I take leave of this last of the seven masterful prophets who have swayed by their appeal to religion the life of the race? More than in any of our preceding studies do we feel a certain solid confidence in our ground. We have been touching a character which one biographer says "is as well known as Milton or Luther." This can hardly be true, but the student of Mohammedanism does see a religion forming under his eyes. He finds a bible practically coined out of one brain; and he can without difficulty trace this bible to its immediate antecedents and discover its unquestioned sources. Here he finds the Sabaism, or star-worship, of the desert, the

message of Persia's Magi, Old Testament characters and poetry, the Rabbinical lore of the Talmud, shreds of the New Testament gospel, woven like so many strands into a rope that is to bind the hearts of millions to God; or, to say the same thing in stronger and higher phrase, that is to bind them to duty, hold them to the right. As heretofore, we find that the most strikingly original, perhaps the only original thing in Mohammedanism, is Mohammed. The splendid personality is the unaccountable and immeasurable factor in this as in all the great movements of human history. With Mohammed as with the other great teachers, the foolish heart of humanity was prompt to magnify his birth with portents. It is said that the powers of the earth were shaken; that the sacred fire which the Magi had been guarding for years went out; that the powers of evil took flight, and that the guardians of the sacred stone recognized that a new glory was on the earth, and gave thanks when the mother took her new-born babe into her arms. In this case, as in previous cases, it is our privilege to change this miracle into parable, and to see how it was all truer than fact and that it is the poetry of history which enables us to find the spirit that has animated the body.

Mohammed helps us in this comparative study in another way. We are close enough to him to discover the defects in his human lineaments. We see him once or twice venturing on a compromise with idolatry and discover his prompt recanting and his splendid shame. In later years, unquestionably, he shared the errors of his time and of his antecedents, and consented to polygamy, though the students urge that it was for political and not for licentious reasons. But I cannot but feel that it was to the permanent hurt of our highest ideality. We must also admit that he alone of the seven great teachers of religion drew the sword in the interests of what seemed to him the truth. But before we dismiss him utterly on that account, let us read Carlyle's stirring defense. He asks, "Where did he get his sword, but by that right to rule and to lead which Providence has given to the masterful souls of the past?" These blemishes ought not to deter us from seeking an acquaintance with this man, this book, and the potent stream which is still flowing through the world, sharing in the work of redeeming mankind from the thrall of the animal and shaping it into the glory of the angel. This stream has in it refreshment, not only for the dusky children of the East, but for the white-faced dwellers in the West, the so-called children of light. Christianity itself hath need of this old gospel of the desert, which inspires fortitude, which transmutes the iron heel of Fate into the will of God and makes endurance a heavenly grace.

Christianity hath need again of the universality of Mohammedanism, whose simple creed has in it but little local coloring and so fits all men and all climes. A writer under the name of Ibn Ishak startled the complacency of Europe and America a little while ago, by an article published in the *Arena* on "The Future of Islam." In this article he predicts the time when Mohammedan minarets shall be reared in Liverpool and in Boston for the regeneration of the Western world, and he advocates the sending of Mohammedan missionaries to the benighted children of Christendom in Europe and America, to lift them into sobriety, to teach them how to distribute wealth to the blessing of the many rather than to the cursing of the few, to rebuke the selfishness of the wealthy, and to alleviate the inebriety of our besotted millions. It may not come about in this way, but we certainly should try to keep ourselves open to receive the light that comes not from one, but from all nations. We should welcome these friends from the far East, brothers in the Universal Church, members in the Church of All Souls, communicants at the table around which the bread of truth and the wine of love are given and received.

O, my friends! let not this study of the masterful spirits of history pass as an idle episode in our lives, a time when we were amused by the strangeness of the pictures or the remoteness of the materials. I have spoken to you of these great beacon lights of humanity, not in the interest of scholarship, for in that direction I have no right

to speak, but in the interests of life, in the interests of law and of love, in the name of morality and for the up-building of character. I have tried to show that through all the religious experiences of the race there runs, like the red thread in the cordage of the British navy, the common fiber of duty as the supreme thing of love, the crowning law, binding us all to the natural, which is the spiritual; to the real, which is the ideal; to the common, which is the divine. When miracle and dividing creeds, when form and class-making ceremonials are either laid aside or duly subordinated, then and not till then will the faces of these great masters emerge out of the mist, come down out of the clouds, and through their smiling radiance stir within us a sense of kinship, a love for all mankind, and a rapturous relish for this world of storm and sunshine, this world of winter snows and summer blossoms, this world of bird-songs and child-laughter, this world whose loves lead to anguish and to loyalty. Then shall we exclaim with the enchanted Miranda,

“O wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in it!”

